

Pagan Syriac Monuments in the Vilayet of Urfa

Author(s): J. B. Segal

Source: *Anatolian Studies*, Vol. 3 (1953), pp. 97-119

Published by: British Institute at Ankara

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3642388>

Accessed: 10-10-2019 16:24 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

British Institute at Ankara is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Anatolian Studies*

PAGAN SYRIAC MONUMENTS IN THE VILAYET OF URFA

By J. B. SEGAL

In May-June 1952 I was able, through the guidance and with the generous assistance of Mr. Seton Lloyd, Director of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, to visit the monuments of Sumatar Harabesi on two occasions, the first for three days, the second for six days. The shortness of my stay there, the restricted circumstances under which I was operating and, above all, the lack of the equipment required to carry out a precise and satisfactory survey—all combined to allow no more than a comparatively superficial examination of the site. I have, nevertheless, ventured to present my preliminary findings here, until the opportunity may occur for at least a partial clearance of the site and a more detailed survey.

I. SUMATAR HARABESI.

SUMATAR HARABESI is situated in the Tektek mountains, a rugged plateau to the east of the plain of Harran, in the vilayet of Urfa. It lies at an intersection of wadis about 100 kilometres south-east of Urfa (the ancient Edessa) and 40-50 kilometres north-east of Harran. It has few permanent inhabitants, but at all times of the day nomad shepherds with their flocks and herds converge on this important watering-place. It is reputed to have 300 wells of sweet water; thirty were in use in the early summer of 1952.

The only person who has recorded archaeological finds in this area is Pognon, who visited the Tektek mountains in 1901 and 1905.¹ At Sumatar² he noted "the ruins of a strong castle, those of several buildings of which one is fairly large and may have been a convent or church, and a considerable number of man-made caves. It seems", he inferred, "that there was there in the Middle Ages a small town or a large village."³ Pognon did not examine the ruins closely; had he done so he would undoubtedly have revised his verdict. He contented himself with recording, with admirable accuracy, the reliefs and inscriptions in one cave.

A natural mount, perhaps 50 metres high, at the junction of the wadis dominates the scene. To the east of this central mount there is an uninterrupted view. To the south and south-west lie four hillocks which upon examination bore no obvious signs of occupation. To the west and north, however, there stand eight groups of ruins, six of them consisting of only a single building. They form an uneven arc at a radius varying between a quarter and half a mile from the central mount (Fig. 1). All the ruins are constructed of local stone, probably quarried at Sumatar itself. All are in varying stages of disrepair; none has a roof standing. Six of these

¹ Sachau did not travel through the Tektek mountains; see his *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien*, 224. Guyer traversed "this little-explored and mysterious range", but saw little of interest and did not visit Sumatar; cf. his *My Journey down the Tigris*, 84 ff.

² Pognon calls the place Soghmatar.

³ *Inscriptions sémitiques de la Syrie, de la Mésopotamie et de la région de Mossoul*, 1907, 23 ff.

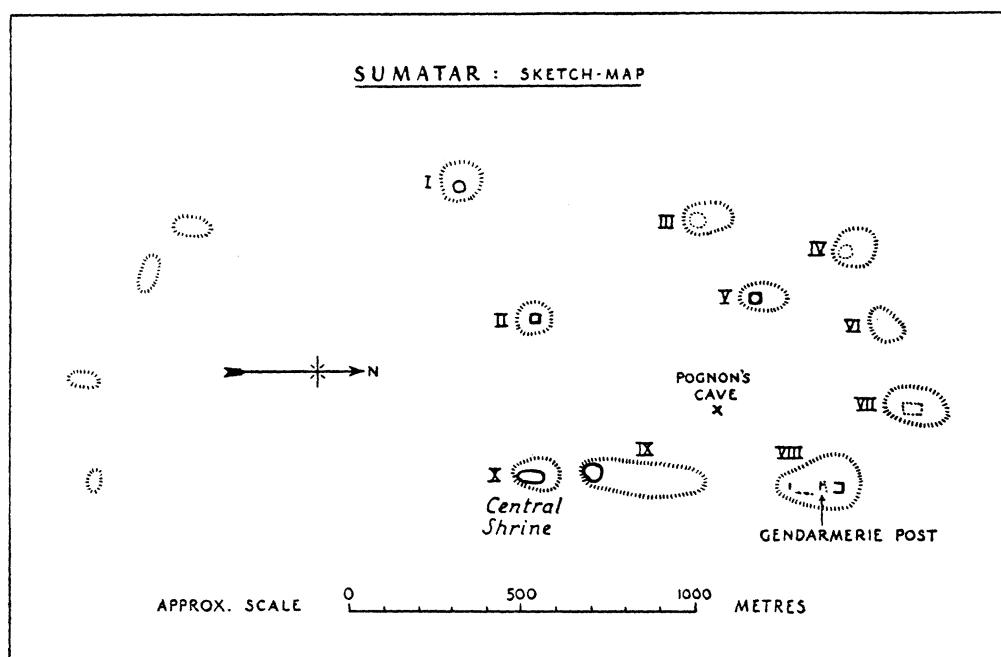


FIG. 1.

ruined buildings have one feature in common—a subterranean grotto, its entrance pointing exactly in the direction of the central mount, which was, as we shall see, a sacred mount. Ingress to each grotto is now blocked by heavy stones. The two which I managed to enter consist of chambers after the manner of the Roman rock-cut tombs that are common throughout this area ; on two, sometimes on three, sides of these chambers are arcosolia. A seventh ruin has a similar chamber, with three arcosolia, at ground level ; here also the entrance to the chamber faces the central mount.

II. DETAILS OF THE RUINS.

No. I (Plate IX, 1) lies about half a mile west-south-west of the central mount. It is a cylindrical building, only partially ruined. The stones, as everywhere at Sumatar, are laid without cement. Eight pilasters appear at regular intervals along the outer wall. Six courses of stones are standing, the second lowest and the two highest having moulding. Notable is the attractive “lip” of the coping. The circumference of the building is 34·50 m. The length of each stone is between 62 cm. and 92 cm. ; the height of each course is (beginning from the lowest) 60 cm., 50 cm., 45 cm., 50 cm., 45 cm. and 45 cm. respectively. On the north side dressed stones lie on the ground in disorder.

Below the ground, with its entrance facing the central mount, is a grotto approached by a ramp. The opening (partially blocked by heavy stones) is 2·30 m. high and 1·50 m. wide. Inside are two underground chambers. The outer chamber has two arcosolia, one facing north-north-west the other south-south-east. It is connected with the inner chamber by a short passage with a low vaulted roof of five narrow stones laid in the form of an

arch. In the inner chamber are two arcosolia, one facing east-north-east, the other north-north-west ; both stand 95 cm. from the floor. The former arcosolium is 1.75 m. wide and 45 cm. deep, the latter 1.85 m. wide and 60 cm. deep. The latter has two fairly ornate "legs" carved in relief on its base.

No. II (Plate IX, 2) stands on a hillock about a quarter of a mile due west of the central mount. It is in the form of an exact square ; each side is 5.70 m. long and (in the present state of the edifice) of approximately the same height. The interior of the building is a small courtyard ; its opening to the sky is 2 m. square. On the south, west and north sides of the courtyard are situated arcosolia, each surmounted by an attractive arched roof. The entrance to the courtyard is on the east, facing the central mount ; but the way is blocked by stones, and access is impossible.

No. III lay on a hillock somewhat less than half a mile west-north-west of the central mount. It has been completely razed but there appear to be traces of a cylindrical building. No grotto is actually visible, but a heap of stones probably conceals the entrance to a grotto. This entrance would exactly face the central mount.

No. IV is situated on a hillock about half a mile north-west of the central mount. As in the case of No. III, only the outlines of a building remain. It is likely also to have been cylindrical in shape. The entrance to a grotto faces the central mount ; it is blocked by stones.

No. V (Plate IX, 3) stands on a hillock a little more than a quarter of a mile north-west of the central mount. It is in fairly good condition on the east and south sides. A square base—three courses of stones are showing above the ground—has imposed upon it a circular building of which seven courses remain. The outer perimeter of the circular wall reaches to the outer edge of each side of the square base, a feat of some architectural skill. Each stone is approximately 45 cm. high. The circumference of the circular wall is 34.50 m., the same as that of No. I. Dressed stones with carved mouldings and bigger than the stones still in position in the walls are lying on the ground, chiefly to the north-west.

The entrance to the grotto underneath this building faces, as usual, the central mount. On the left, as one approaches the entrance, is a recess about 1.20 m. long along the outside south-east wall of the grotto. The grotto itself is entered through a short passage with a vaulted ceiling. It contains two chambers. The south-east side of the outer chamber (that is, the side through which the grotto is entered) is 4.90 m. long, the opening being 1.80 m. wide and the walls to the right and left being respectively 1.30 m. and 1.80 m. long. The side walls—to the north-east and south-west—are 4 m. long. Each has an arcosolium about 2 m. wide and 1.05 m. deep on a base 80 cm. above the floor and with an arched opening 1.35 m. high at its apex and 10 cm. below the ceiling. In the east corner of the chamber is a large manhole through which one descends to a small lower cave about 1.20 m. below the level of the floor. The north-west side of the outer chamber is 5.20 m. long. Of this 1.90 m. represents the width of a low step which one ascends when passing through into the inner chamber.

The inner chamber grows narrower towards the end, the north-west wall being only 3.05 m. long. An arcosolium, between 2.10 m. and 2.40 m. wide, is set in the middle of this wall and of each of the two side walls (on, that is, the north-east and the south-west).

At No. VI, on a hillock about half a mile north-north-west of the central mount, many oblong stones lie in disorder ; there are, however, no obvious signs of any building. It is possible to trace the outline of what may be a grotto entrance facing the central mount. Either the opening has been very thoroughly filled in or it has been merely marked out prior to the actual work of tunnelling. More likely, however, we have here the site of a quarry—indeed, near by lies a stone newly hewn and in the process of being eased out of the ground (Plate X, 3)—and this hillock plays no part in the complex of the Sumatar ruins.

No. VII lies on a hillock about half a mile north-north-west of the central mount and east-north-east of No. VI. Here can be traced the razed outline of the base of a rectangular building. A grotto faces the central mount, its opening blocked by stones.

No. VIII is situated on the summit of a mount half a mile due north of the central mount. Three walls only are standing ; that on the north is 4.72 m. long, those on the east and west are 4.22 m. long. The stones are 60 cm. thick. The construction of the surviving walls and the great amount of fairly ornate masonry on the ground suggest that there was originally a wall on the south side also. No grotto is actually visible below the ruin ; but a heap of stones probably conceals a grotto entrance, facing (like the others) the central mount.

Immediately to the south of No. VIII stands a row of low stone pillars. Near by is the headless stone statue of a male figure, less than life size (Plate XI, 1). The figure is dressed in a long garment reaching below the knees ; underneath appear trouser legs. At the left side of the figure hangs a great sword, its pommel grasped in the left hand. The right arm is flexed over the chest.

Further south and at a lower level on the same mount is a courtyard with the remains of a high wall which apparently once enclosed a rectangular area (Plate XII, 2). Some small caves on the north side of this courtyard are now occupied as a gendarmerie post. In one is an early Kufic inscription. It is this group of buildings, and in particular the wall, which Pognon must have seen only from a distance and apparently regarded as a medieval convent or church.

No. IX is a complex of ruins on a mount due north of the central mount, lying, that is, between it and the ruins of No. VIII. It is separated from the central mount only by a narrow wadi. At the southern extremity of No. IX—nearest, that is, the central mount—is a castellated ruin with an impressive system of walls, known locally to-day as *al-qal'a*, "the Citadel," and described by Pognon as a "medieval castle". The area on the summit of the "Citadel" is larger than that of the other buildings at Sumatar ; in the middle stands a well. The approach to the "Citadel" from the south and west is steep and difficult ; it is easier from the east.

But on the north side the mount declines in a gradual and gentle slope. The "Citadel" has no grotto. It is constructed of somewhat smaller stones than the other ruins, and it is therefore possible that Pognon is right in holding it to be "medieval".

North of the "Citadel" a low wall runs east and west. A well, 1·20 m. in diameter, lies at a distance of 12·90 m. north of this wall and on the west side of the mount. The well has a semicircle of masonry along its eastern rim. Another low ruined wall runs east to west 10·40 m. further north. There appear also (if one may judge from a superficial examination) the outlines of two broad and four narrow steps ascending eastwards. Also in this area are found moulded stones lying on the ground, at least one low arch, and a low cave, its immense mouth 9 m. wide and facing south. There are, further, groups of dressed stones scattered over the north side of the mount and arranged in the form of cyst-graves. One measures 3·20 m. by 1·50 m., another 2·90 m. by 1·80 m., while a third is as much as 4·50 m. in length. They are orientated east-west.

III. THE SACRED MOUNT.

We come now to No. X, the central mount itself. This is, as we have seen, the focal point of all the monuments of Sumatar; all the grottoes face in the direction of this mount. It was a sacred mount, and its bare height dominates the immediate surroundings.

On the northern flank of the extreme summit of the central mount are two reliefs carved in the rock (Plate X, 1). The relief on the right shows a full-length male figure, 1·10 m. high, standing under an ornate archivolt (Plate XI, 2). The figure has a circular headdress and is clad in a garment extending to the knees. The right arm is flexed, the forearm touching the hip; at the right elbow is an indistinct object, perhaps triangular in shape. The left arm seems to hang down to its full length and to be touching a narrow object. The attitude is probably devotional. To the right of this relief is an inscription, written—like all the inscriptions at Sumatar⁴—in Syriac characters. It reads:—

This image was commanded⁵ by the deity from Ma'nā on the 13th day of Adar in the year 476.

The relief on the left is a bust set in a niche (Plate X, 2). It has headbands in the hair—a bow and a half-loop on each side—and the folds in the outer garment are clearly visible. Beside this relief are three Syriac inscriptions, two on the left and one on the right. The inscription on the immediate left of the relief reads:—

Šilā made (this) image to Sin the deity for the life of Tiridates son of Adōnā and for the life of his brethren.⁶

⁴ The early Kufic inscription in the cave of No. VIII (above, p. 100) is, however, an exception.

⁵ Rather than "entrusted to"; Syr. *pqd*.

⁶ Or "brother".

The inscription beside it is somewhat obscure ; only the last lines are certain and appear to refer to a treasure in the care of the deity. The inscription on the right reads :—

Bar KWZ'. May ZBY ⁷ and his sons be remembered before the deity.

The summit of the central mount is a bare rock 18 m. long (east–west) by 90 m. wide. At one time it must have had a temple ; dressed stones lie in disorder at its foot on the western side. On the face of the rock are carved nine inscriptions in Syriac characters. Seven are short memorial records ; the most important reads :—

May 'Abhsāmyā son of Adōnā the military commander be remembered.

May he be remembered before Mārīlāhā. May BBS and Tiridates sons of BSM' (? 'Abhsāmyā) be remembered.

The remaining two inscriptions are dedicatory and are given pride of place, one on the western, the other on the eastern edge of the rock. The first reads :—

On the New Moon of Šebaṭ in the year 476 I, Tiridates, son of Adōnā, ruler of 'RB, built this altar and set a pillar to Mārīlāhā for the life of my lord the king and his sons and for the life of Adōnā my father and for the life of . . .⁸ my brother and of our sons (?).

The second text records the dedication of a temple and the setting-up of a stool for the sacred pillar, or *baetyl*, already mentioned. It reads :—

In Šebaṭ in the year 476 on the New Moon I, MNYŠ, son of Adōnā and Ma'nā and 'LBT and BLBN' and 'NBWD (?), his brethren ⁶—we set this pillar on this blessed mount and erected the stool for him whom my ruler nourishes. He shall be . . .⁸ after Tiridates the ruler. And he shall give the stool for him whom he nourishes.⁹ His recompense shall be from Mārīlāhā. And if he withholds the stool, then the pillar will be ruined. He is the god who knows us (?).

IV. POGNON'S CAVE.

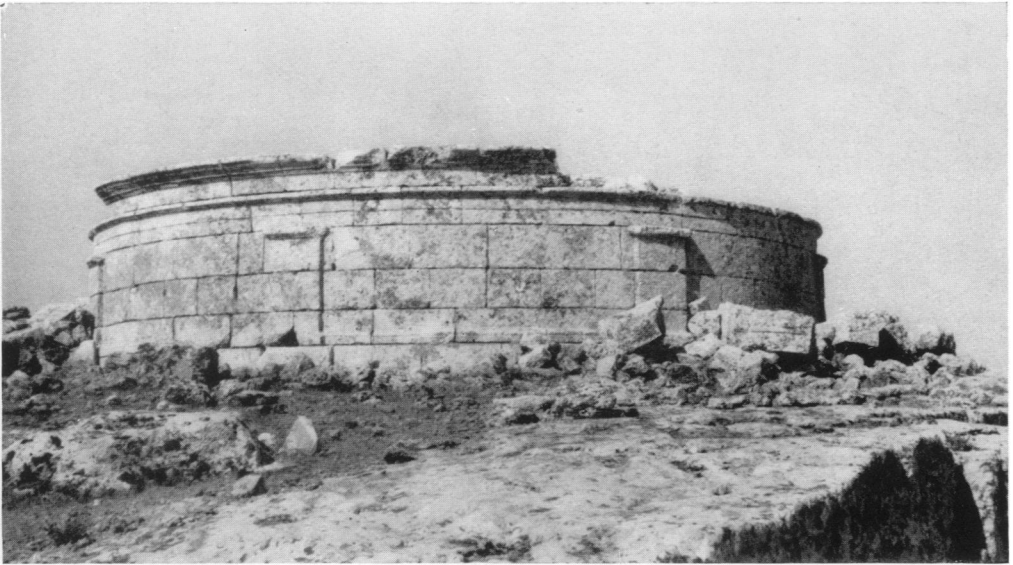
The cave at Sumatar which was recorded by Pognon lies on the western side of a main wadi bed running north and south ; it is about five minutes' walk north-west of the central mount. This is the only cave with inscriptions and reliefs in the immediate vicinity of Sumatar, as I verified in the course of an exhaustive search. Pognon has described it with clarity and accuracy, and only those points are brought forward here that may assist in our general discussion of the Sumatar monuments.

The principal wall of the cave is that which faces east. The dimensions of this wall and the arrangement of its reliefs are most symmetrical. In the centre is a niche 1·80 m. broad, 1·20 m. deep and 2·40 m. high ; it extends nearly to the ceiling. On either side of this niche is carved in relief what

⁷ ZKY is a possible reading.

⁸ This word is uncertain.

⁹ Or " who nourishes him ".



1. Sumatar : cylindrical building (No. I).



2. Sumatar : square building (No. II) (photograph by courtesy of Dr. D. S. Rice).



3. Sumatar : cylindrical building on square base (No. V).



1. Sumatar : view of central mount and reliefs from north (No. X).



2. Sumatar : relief with Syriac inscriptions (No. X).



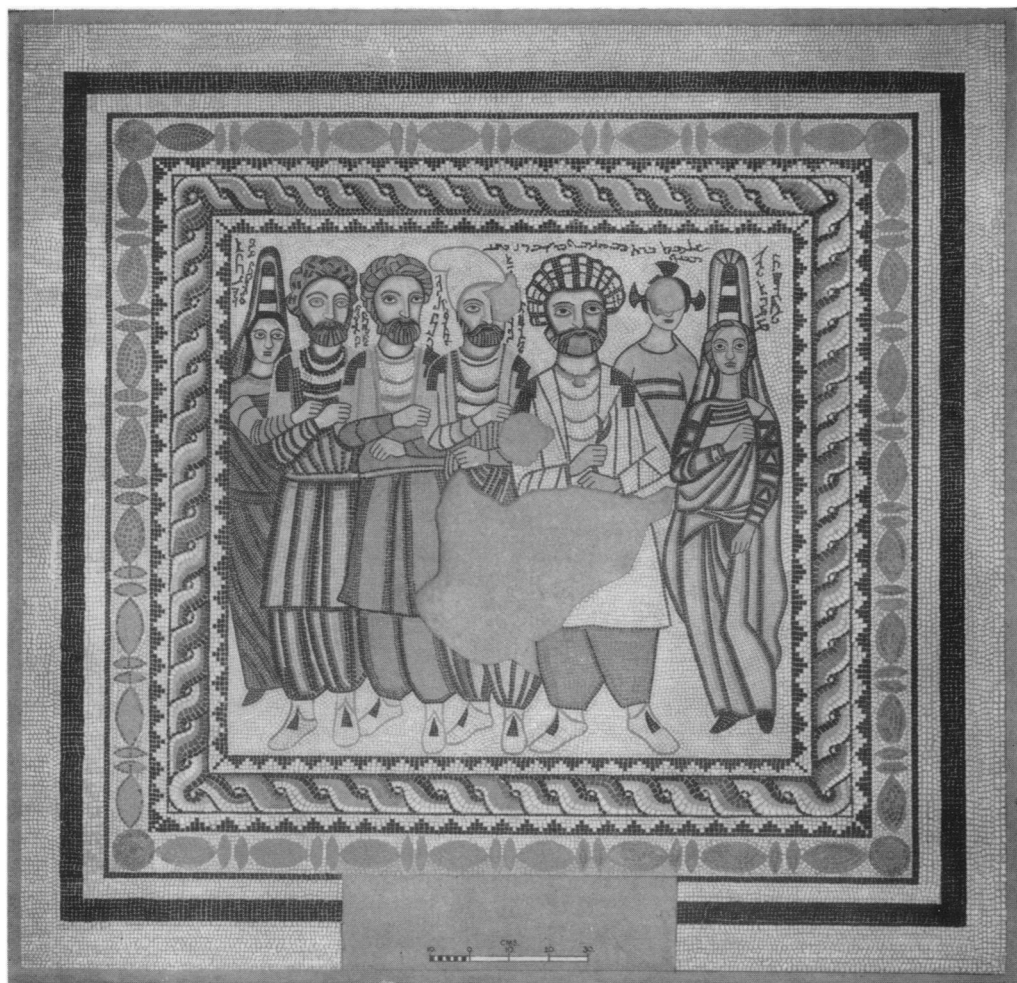
3. Sumatar : stone partly quarried (No. VI).



1. Sumatar : male statue (No. VIII) (photograph by courtesy of Dr. D. S. Rice).



2. Sumatar : relief with Syriac inscription (No. X) (photograph by courtesy of Dr. D. S. Rice).



1. Urfa : mosaic near citadel (photograph by courtesy of Mr. Seton Lloyd).



2. Sumatar : view south from No. VIII with "citadel" and central mount in background.

Pognon calls “une sorte de hampe rassemblant un peu à un corps humain très allongé et très étroit”. It may be described as a narrow pillar—it is 65 cm. broad—tapering at the bottom and with a round “head”

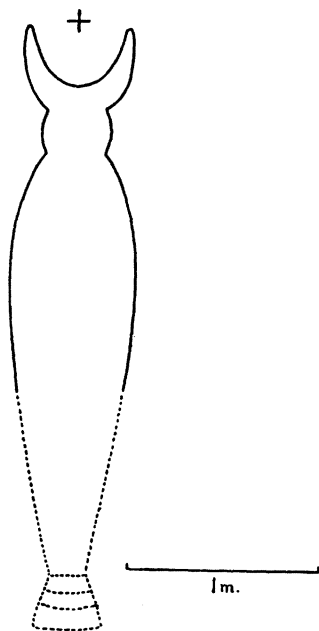


FIG. 2.

surmounted by horns ; a cross is incised in the wall above (Fig. 2). On the outer side of each pillar and at the ends of the wall is a full-length relief. Although these two reliefs are badly worn, it is clear that they both represent a bearded figure with a mitred headdress ; the figure is more than life-size and 1 m. broad. Beside the figure on the left are the following inscriptions :

Ḥaphsai son of Bar Kalbā

(This is the image) that was made by Bar Nahar (or NHD) son of Rīnai (or DYNY), ruler of ‘RB, in honour of Aurelius Ḥaphsai, son of Bar [Kalbā], freedman (?) ¹⁰ [of An]toninus [Caesa]r (?), his lord and his benefactor.

Beside the head of the figure on the right is the following inscription :—

(This is the image) that was made by Adōnā [son of] Tiridates [in honour of Ḥa]phsai [son of Bar] Kalbā.

On the left wall (facing north) are cut two full-length figures in relief. Each has the following inscription engraved above his head :—

Wā’el, son of Wā’el.

Between the two figures is written :—

These (are the) images made by Wā’el, son of MWTRW..R’ ¹¹ ; he made ¹² (them) in honour of Wā’el, ruler of ‘RB, son of Wā’el and of Wā’el his son, the military commander of ŠWR (or ŠWD), his lords and his benefactors.

¹⁰ So Pognon, loc. cit.

¹¹ One or two letters are illegible ; the last two letters are R’ or D’.

¹² Reading ‘bd, rather than dpr as Pognon ; dkr is unlikely.

Below is the legend :—

Šilā, son of Šilā, carved.

In the right wall (facing south) are cut in relief four large and one small full-length figures. Beside them are inscriptions that read :—

This is the image made by Ma'nū, son of Moqimū¹³ in honour of Abhgar, ruler of 'RB.

This is the image that [was made by] Mālē, son of Šilā, to Bar Nahar (or NHD), son of Rīnai (or DYNY), ruler of ['RB].

Son of A[dōn]ā.

Tiridates son of Adōnā.

Pognon claims that the figures on the main wall (facing east) are representations of Haphsai, son of Bar Kalbā, to whom they are dedicated. In the same way the other reliefs would represent the two Wā'els, Abhgar and the other personages named. This is more likely than that they are the image of the deity whose emblem is the horned pillar. We may note, however, that all the reliefs are—so far as we can tell from their imperfect state of preservation—similar in appearance.

V. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE SUMATAR MONUMENTS.

Two of the inscriptions on the central mount bear the date 1st Šebaṭ 476, while a third carries the date 13th Adar 476. These dates are without doubt to be calculated by the Seleucid era, which was in regular use at Edessa at this period¹⁴; they correspond to the year A.D. 164–5. The three dated inscriptions at Sumatar are therefore, with one exception,¹⁵ the earliest dated inscriptions in Syriac yet found. The texts will be discussed in detail elsewhere¹⁶; here it is sufficient to remark that the script differs only slightly from the Estrangela of the earliest known dated manuscript in Syriac, written at Edessa at the beginning of the 5th century.¹⁷

The inscriptions in Pognon's cave, all undated, belong to the same period as the three dated inscriptions on the central mount. The niche in the western wall of the cave and the two horned pillars in relief are likely to have been erected first. The two statues in honour of the two Wā'els on the southern wall may have dedicated next; the name Wā'el seems to have been popular at Edessa before the Roman reconquest of the city in 165. The order of dedication of the reliefs on the opposite wall appears to correspond, as we might expect, to the proximity of each statue to the main western wall. First must have been the reliefs in honour of Tiridates, son of Adōnā, and of an unnamed son of Adōnā. The former is not to be

¹³ Here written without y, MQMW.

¹⁴ See, for example, Bellinger, "Chronology of Edessa," in *Yale Classical Studies*, V (1935), 142, on the Edessan document found at Dura Europos.

¹⁵ The inscription at Serrīn (in North Syria, near the left bank of the Euphrates), dated 385 of the Seleucid era; see Moritz, in von Oppenheim, *Inchriften aus Syrien* . . . (1913), 158 ff., and Pognon, *op. cit.*, 15 ff.

¹⁶ *BSOAS.*, vol. XVI.

¹⁷ British Museum Add. 12150, dated 411.

identified with the ruler of 'RB of the same name mentioned in the dedicatory inscription of the central mount ; for it is improbable that the title would have been omitted here. These reliefs were followed by the statue in honour of Abhgar, ruler of 'RB. The latter must have been set up before 179 if we are right in holding that he is that Abhgar who ascended the throne of Edessa in this year (p. 118). The next statues to have been erected must have been those on the western wall to the right and left of the two pillars. Pognon is probably correct in his reconstruction of the text of the inscription dedicated by Bar Nahar (or NHD) to Aurelius Haphsai, in which the latter is described as the " freedman of Antoninus Caesar ". This may be the Emperor Antoninus Pius, who acquired the title Caesar in 138, or the later Emperors Caracalla and Elagabalus, both of whom bore the name Antoninus. It follows that the inscription was written after 138. But it could scarcely have been set up before 165, for from 123 until that year the province of Osrhoene was under Parthian control, and it is improbable that a Roman Emperor's name should have been recorded during that time.¹⁸ We are told by Michael the Syrian that the first Roman governor of Osrhoene after the abolition of the kingdom of Edessa in 248 was called Aurelianus son of Haphsai.¹⁹ Pognon suggests that this name is an error for Aurelius Haphsai, and that the statues on the western wall of the cave were dedicated to this governor of Edessa. This is an attractive hypothesis, but it may be preferable to assume that the Aurelius Haphsai of our cave inscriptions was a contemporary of Abhgar the Great and perhaps the father or a relative of the first Roman governor. Certainly he must have been a prominent person to have had a relief dedicated to him by Bar Nahar (or NHD), ruler of 'RB. This is doubtless the same Bar Nahar (or NHD) in whose own honour a relief is dedicated by Mālē, son of Šilā, on another wall of the cave.

We may assume, then, that the reliefs were made at any time between, say, 150 and 200. The inscriptions of the central mount provide us with more exact information. The temple of Mārīlāhā was consecrated in Šebaṭ 165 and the male relief on the northern side of the mount in the following month. The province of Osrhoene had been already for two and a half centuries buffeted between the great rival empires of Parthia and Rome. In 123 the Parthians placed their nominee on the throne of Edessa. There followed an uneasy peace, until the ominous preparations for a decisive campaign in the Roman camp came to a head in 164. The detachments of L. Verus overran the province and restored the anti-Parthian Ma'nū Philorhomaïos to the throne of Edessa. Thenceforward it remained under direct Roman control. Verus's campaign opened, we are told, in the summer of 164, but Edessa was not captured until 165. It may be assumed that in Šebaṭ 165 the Romans had not yet reached the Tektek mountains and that the difficult terrain of the highlands to the east of Edessa was still

¹⁸ But see Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and its Art* (1938), 23.

¹⁹ *Chronicle*, V, § 5 (ed. Chabot, I, 120).

under the nominal rule of the pro-Parthian king of Edessa, Wā'el, son of Sahrū.

The titles found in the inscriptions at Sumatar are of some interest. The rank *nūhadhrā* occurs once in the cave and once on the central mount; it is also to be restored in the Syriac inscription on the column in Urfa citadel (p. 116). Syriac lexicographers render this Persian term as "military commander".²⁰ The *nūhadhrā* was probably subordinate to the "ruler of 'RB", for the Wā'el who bears this title in the cave inscription is son of Wā'el, ruler of 'RB.

The title "ruler of 'RB" is found three times in Pognon's cave (with the names Wā'el, Abhgar and Bar Nahar (or NHD)) and once on the central mount (Tiridates, son of Adōnā). Pliny calls Edessa one of the cities of "Arabia",²¹ and Abhgar the contemporary of Crassus is called by both Tacitus and Plutarch a king or phylarch of the "Arabs".²² We are told, further, that in 85 B.C., when Osrhoene was part of the Armenian dominions, that king Tigranes entered into friendly relations with the "Skenite" (that is, tent-dwelling) "Arabs" and by these means hoped to control the trade-route there.²³ Moreover, several names in common use at Edessa (for example, Ma'nū, Wā'el, Sahrū) appear to be close to Arabic in form and significance. But we should not identify the people whom the Syrians dubbed 'Arbhāyē with the Arabs of later history. The 'Arbhāyē, from whose violent raids and depredations the townsfolk suffered frequently,²⁴ are the inhabitants of the 'Arabhah, the steppe-lands or desert. With these nomads or semi-nomads the towns of Osrhoene naturally had affinities of language and religion and ties of kinship—just as to-day there are close relations between the inhabitants of Urfa and the "Arabs" who water their herds at Sumatar. The "ruler of 'RB" was, as Pognon perceived,²⁵ the ruler of 'Arab or Bēth 'Arbhāyē, the 'Arabhah. From the 5th century onwards this geographical term is used regularly of the steppe-lands between Nisibis and the Tigris.²⁶ An analogous Greek title Arabarchos is found in a parchment from Dura Europos dated A.D. 121.²⁷ The person who held this title was a powerful officer who is also described as "Governor (*strategos*) of Mesopotamia and Parapotamia". The "ruler of 'Arab" of Sumatar was, however, a lesser personage. He was subordinate to the king of Edessa, for whose life Tiridates, ruler of 'Arab, prays. He must have governed the desert marches to the east of Edessa; they were of strategic

²⁰ Payne Smith, *Thesaurus*, s.v.

²¹ *Hist. nat.*, V, 86. Cf. the description of Dura as ἐν Εὐρωπῇ τῇ πρὸς Ἀραβίᾳ (*Excav. at Dura Europos*, 1932-33, 429 and 248).

²² Tacitus, *Annals*, XII, 12; Plutarch, *Crassus*, 21.

²³ Plutarch, *Lucullus*, 21.

²⁴ See, for example, Isaac of Antioch's lament for Bēth Ḥūr (below, p. 109); Wright, *The Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite*, LXXIX.

²⁵ Op. cit., p. 34, where the question is fully discussed.

²⁶ Payne Smith, *Thesaurus*, s.v.

²⁷ Rostovtzeff and Welles, *Excavations at Dura-Europos*, 1929-1930, 201 ff. Little can be deduced from the use of Arabarchos in Egypt and by Cicero. But cf. G. A. Cooke, *Text-book of North Semitic Inscriptions*, 260.

importance not only as the border district between the two empires of East and West, but because through them passed vital overland routes.²⁸ We do not know whether the office of ruler of 'Arab was held simultaneously by more than one man. If there was only one ruler of 'Arab then it is unlikely—if we may judge from the Sumatar inscriptions—to have been a hereditary office at this time.

The "king and his sons" mentioned in one inscription is not the Parthian ruler; the other dignitary, Aurelius Haphsai, to whom a statue is dedicated by a ruler of 'Arab at Sumatar is unlikely to be of more than local importance or of higher rank than governor of Edessa. The "king" is, without doubt, the king of Edessa, the greatest city in the vicinity. The particular monarch referred to is Wā'el, son of Sahrū, who was expelled from his throne in Edessa by the Romans in 165, the year of the consecration of the central shrine at Sumatar. We shall see that there was a direct religious bond between Sumatar and Edessa at this time. It is possible, indeed, that the consecration of this shrine in the remote fastnesses of the Tektek mountains took place because the fighting around Edessa made it difficult to carry out religious ceremonial there. Sumatar, however, must have been regarded as a place of worship already earlier, if we are correct in our dating of the inscriptions of Pognon's cave.

VI. PLANET-WORSHIP IN OSRHOENE AND THE "SABIANS" OF HARRAN

What were the rites practised at Sumatar? To answer this we must examine the general religious scene in the province of Osrhoene during the first centuries of the Christian era. The evidence can be assembled only with difficulty. The rulers of Edessa accepted Christianity at the beginning of the 3rd century; and the Edessans were not slow to recognize the pre-eminence which their city had acquired as the first Syrian town of importance officially to adopt the new and rising religion. Few pagan records were permitted to survive. The Syriac inscription on the column in the ruined citadel has no mention of heathen cults. The tomb-inscription of G'W, it is true, refers to the deity Mārīlāhā and is undoubtedly pagan. It may have been spared because the divine name was given a Christological significance.

We know, however, that the Sun-god Šamaš was worshipped at Edessa. One of the city-gates was at one time called the Gate of Bēth-Šmeš²⁹; and the name of the deity appears in compound proper names.³⁰ Julian tells us that associated with the Sun-god at Edessa were two divinities called Monimos and Azizos. These are identified by Iamblichus (d. 325) as the planets Mercury and Mars,³¹ but Cumont is certainly right in main-

²⁸ Cf. the use of the term "Arab" by Joshua the Stylite, which Wright translates "Arab territory"; Wright, *op. cit.*, XXXVIII.

²⁹ *Chronicle of Edessa*, LXVIII.

³⁰ Bar-Šmeš in Phillips, *Doctrine of Addai*, 39, and Sachau, "Edessenische Inschriften," *ZDMG.*, XXXVI (1882), 162 f.; 'bhedh-Šmeš, below p. 117; Amašmeš, below, p. 116; probably also ŠMŠGRM in Phillips, *op. cit.*, 1 ff., and Sachau, *op. cit.*, 158.

³¹ Julian, *Oratio*, IV, 150.

taining that they represent rather Phosphoros and Hesperos, the evening and morning aspects of the planet Venus.³² In any case, there can be no doubt of their astral character. That the moon-deity was worshipped at Edessa is shown by the crescent symbol on the coins.³³ Jacob of Sarug (6th century), in his homily on the fall of the idols, inveighs against the worship of "Nabū and Bēl with many (others)" at Edessa.³⁴ Nabū and Bēl are planetary deities, the former being Mercury, the latter Jupiter. In the Doctrine of Addai (which probably assumed its present form not later than the 4th century) we read further :—

Who is this Nabū, a fashioned idol to which ye bow down, and Bēl which ye honour? Lo, there are among you those who worship Bath-Nīkal like the Harranians, your neighbours, and Tar'āthā like the men of Mabbūg and the Eagle like the 'Arbhāyē and the sun and the moon as others who are like you. Do not be led astray by the rays of the luminaries or the gleaming star.³⁵

Here Tar'āthā is likely to be a variant form of Venus. The Eagle may be the symbol of Jupiter, or it may be the term given, as it was by the later Arabs, to the constellation Lyre which includes one of the brightest stars in the Northern Hemisphere.³⁶ There can be little doubt that star cults played a significant part in the religion of pagan Edessa.

The evidence for planet-worship at Harran, the other great town of Osrhoene, during the first millennium of the Christian era is even stronger. Harran clung to its pagan cults with a tenacity that angered the Christians of Edessa. There appears to have been no bishop at Harran before the middle of the 4th century, and Christianity had made little headway there. Julian "the Apostate" was welcomed with warmth by the pagans of Harran; the Christian Jovian visited them with punishment and the Christians of Edessa with rewards.³⁷ In the 6th century the Harranians were still largely pagan, for Procopius, a contemporary of these events, relates their sympathetic treatment on this account by the Persian king.³⁸ And in the next century it was the surrender of the pagans of Harran (following the capitulation of Edessa) that led to the fall of the town to the Moslem army.³⁹

Harran, indeed, was the home of the Syrian heathens (Syriac *ḥanphē*). There, as at ancient Edessa, planet-worship had an all-important role. The Harranian temple of Sin, the moon deity, was celebrated in antiquity.

³² *Revue archéologique*, 3^{me} Serie, XII (1888), 95.

³³ Hill, *Catalogue of Greek coins of Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persia*, 94.

³⁴ Martin, "Discours de Jacques de Sarroug sur la chute des idoles," *ZDMG.*, XXIX, 110 f.; cf. the name 'bhedh-Nabū, Phillips, *op. cit.*, 32.

³⁵ After Phillips, *op. cit.*, 23. Bath-Nīkal is possibly to be identified with Ningal, consort of Sin, the Moon-deity; see Sidney Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts*, 63, 67.

³⁶ For the former view, see, for example, Parrot, "Fouilles de Baalbek," *Syria*, X, 122; for the latter, Payne Smith, *Thesaurus*, s.v. *nšr*.

³⁷ See the contemporary, if biased, remarks in *Ephraimi Syri Carmina Nisibena*, ed. Bickell (1886), XXXI-XXXIV, and A. Mez, *Geschichte der Stadt Harran in Mesopotamien bis zum Einfall der Araber*, 59 f.

³⁸ *Bell. Pers.*, II, 13.

³⁹ Baladhūri, *Kitāb futūḥ al-buldān*, 174 f.; cf. Mez, *op. cit.*, 64.

Jacob of Sarug mentions other deities worshipped at Harran, among them B'el Šamēn (usually equated with Jupiter), Tar'āthā, and one with the strange name of "Mār(y) of his dogs". This god is perhaps the hunter Orion, at whose heels are the constellations Canis major and Canis minor.⁴⁰ In the 5th century Isaac of Antioch describes the paganism of Bēth Hūr, a town in the vicinity of Nisibis but founded by Harran and practising the religious ceremonies of Harran. They carried out orgiastic rites in honour of Šamaš and Sin, whom they held to be male and female. They worshipped B'el Šamēn, "chief of the gods"; his worship had been discontinued at Harran, perhaps temporarily. At Bēth Hūr virgins were sacrificed to Venus, just as the "Arbhāyē" performed human sacrifice to her counterpart Balti or 'Ūzī. The womenfolk made offerings and poured libations to Venus on the roof-tops to grant them beauty and love.⁴¹

The picture drawn for us by Jacob of Sarug reflects, in spite of the poetic hyperbole, the scene at the time :—

On the tops of the hills (Satan) had built palaces to the goddesses, and on the high places (erected) painted temples to idols . . . On one hill were slaughtered sacrifices to Ares, on another was built an altar to Hermes ; and one valley was called the vale ⁴² of Heracles,⁴³ and another high place by the name of the house of the gods. There was no hill that was not moist with the blood of sacrifices, and no high place that was empty of libations : youths in multitudes were given as sacrifices, and maidens slaughtered to female idols . . . to the sun and the moon and to the star of Venus and to the luminaries . . . And the gods had a lofty seat of renown and images were erected on heroic pillars, and priests were dressed in fine spun linen and goodly robes.⁴⁴

But Osrhoene had no Lucian to describe the details of pagan ceremonial during the first centuries of the Christian era. The Christians viewed this ceremonial with distaste ; to the pagans it must have been an everyday aspect of life that invited no description. It is not until the 10th century, when the pagans of Harran, the so-called Sabians, became a favourite subject of research to Moslem antiquaries, that we are given a full picture of their beliefs and ritual. The obstinacy and devotion to paganism of the Harranians has already been shown ; there can be no doubt that these pagan "Sabians" were carrying on antique and traditional practices.

The material on the "Sabians" was assembled a century ago by Chwolson, in his brilliant and erudite volumes *Die Ssabier und der Ssabismus*.⁴⁵ Little has been added since Chwolson's day.⁴⁶ Several of

⁴⁰ Martin, op. cit., 107. That the dog-star was worshipped may be shown by the name Bar-Kalbā, Phillips, op. cit., 17, and above, p. 103.

⁴¹ *S. Isaac Antiocheni opera omnia*, ed. Bickell, I, 206 ff. ; cf. Duval, *REJ.*, XIV, 49. On the worship of Venus by the "Arabs" in the 1st century, see Cumont, "Le culte de Venus chez les Arabes au 1er siècle," *Syria*, VIII, 368.

⁴² Reading *nahlā*, with Martin.

⁴³ Heracles, it may be noted, was the name of a constellation in the Northern Hemisphere with a famous star cluster.

⁴⁴ Martin, loc. cit.

⁴⁵ St. Petersburg, 1856.

⁴⁶ The principal works are Sachau, *Chronology of Ancient Nations . . . the Athār ul-Bākiya*

the sources quoted by him are reliable and cite their informants with care ; nevertheless, they must be treated with greater caution than Chwolson's enthusiasm would permit. In the first place, their accounts are largely restricted to Harran itself, yet there are clear indications that the " Sabian " cult was practised further afield. We know, for example, that at the time of its conquest by the Moslems in 639 the pagans of Harran looked towards the pagans of Edessa as their political mentors. On the other hand, there is a notable tendency among writers on the " Sabians ", however critical their judgment, to use the epithet " Sabian " as a generic term for all heathens, embracing peoples as widely divergent as the Greeks and Romans in the west and the Egyptians and Buddhists in the east. Side by side with this, our authors are inclined to accentuate those details of " Sabian " ritual calculated to arouse the hostility and repugnance of their readers. We see the " Sabians " only through the eyes of their detractors. It is probable, for example, that human sacrifice played, as we have seen, some part in the pagan ritual of Osrhoene. But it is unlikely that such rites were practised in Moslem times, and the blood-curdling accounts of the " talking " human head are almost certainly to be rejected.⁴⁷

The name " Sabian " is found only in Arabic or as a derivative from Arabic. Arab lexicographers explain the word *ṣābi* or *ṣābī* as derived from verbs meaning " arise, apostatize " or " incline, turn away from the (true) religion ".⁴⁸ Neither explanation is plausible ; and the forced rendering of the word by the Arab philologists may well show that it was strange to them and that it is of non-Arabic origin. The attractive suggestion has been made that *ṣābī* is derived from Syriac *ṣbha'*, " moisten, dip " *ṣbha'*, but this, too, is not free from grave objections.⁴⁹ It is, nevertheless, likely that the word is Syriac, for that language was employed by the " Sabians " at a comparatively late date. The members of the sect, however, referred to their religion simply as *ḥanphūthā*, paganism.

To historians and philosophers—Moslem, Jewish and Christian—from the 10th century onwards the " Sabians " presented a problem at once romantic and elusive.⁵⁰ Harran, that ancient city, was hallowed by its

of *Al-Birūnī*, 1879, and Dozy-de Goeje, " Nouveaux documents pour l'étude de la religion des Harraniens," in *Actes du VI^{me} Congrès international des Orientalistes . . . tenu en 1883 à Leide*, 2^{me} partie, Section I, 281.

⁴⁷ Chwolson, op. cit., II, 152 ; de Goeje, op. cit., 294. Cf. the compromise view of 'Abd al-Masīh ibn Ishāq al-Kindi (prob. c. 950) quoted by *Al-Birūnī* (in Sachau, op. cit., 187) : the Sabians " are notorious for their sacrificing human beings but at present they are not allowed to do it in public ".

⁴⁸ See Lane, *Lexicon*, s.v. *ṣb'*, *ṣbw*.

⁴⁹ This derivation is supported by Chwolson, op. cit., I, 110 ff., and Dozy, op. cit., 290. Cf. Syriac *maṣbū'ithā*, baptism, and Mandaean *maṣbūthā*, pron. *maṣwetta* ; Drower, *Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran*, 102. But Syriac *ṣbha*, " moisten, dip, dye ", is transitive and is not the equivalent of Arabic *ighṭasala* (whence the *Mughṭasilah*) ; and the development of Syr. *ṣābi* > *ṣabi* into Ar. *ṣābī*, postulated by this theory, is difficult.

⁵⁰ Among Moslem writers on the Sabians whose works are extant are Ibn al-Nadīm, Mas'ūdi, *Al-Birūnī*, Ibn Sinā, Šahristānī, Isfahānī, Dimašqi and Maqrīzī. Our main Jewish source is Maimonides ; our main Christian sources are Dionysius of Tell-Mahre (on the " Manichaeans " of Harran) and Bar Hebraeus.

associations with the patriarchs and matriarchs of the Bible,⁵¹ and it figured (as we know now) in the annals of Hittites, Assyrians and Babylonians, as later it figured in the history of Parthians and Romans. Here were practised ancient pagan rites that had withstood successively the spiritual and temporal might of Christianity and Islam. Nor were the ceremonies of this sect celebrated only in the comparative obscurity of this corner of the Moslem empire. Among its devotees were numbered famous scientists and men of letters who attained high office at the court of the Caliphs in the 9th to 11th centuries. At Baghdad these "Sabians" won the esteem of their Moslem contemporaries by their integrity and ability; and they earned the licence of the Commander of the Faithful himself to practise their ceremonial openly at their places of worship in the vicinity of Harran.⁵² The "Sabians" disappear from sight in the 12th century.

The earliest mention of the "Sabians" is found in three passages in the Qoran.⁵³ There they are regarded as a religious denomination in the same category as the Jews and the Christians. Like Jews and Christians, the "Sabians" are to receive the toleration of Islam. We next meet the "Sabians" in an incident that is said to have occurred two centuries later. The Caliph Ma'mūn passed by Harran in 830. Some of the inhabitants wore long hair and the garment called *qaba'* (cf. p. 117); they had, it appeared, neither prophet nor a revealed book. Ma'mūn (it is alleged) ordered them to adopt Islam or one of the protected religions. A few, however, refused to abjure their faith. They were advised by a Moslem jurist of Harran to call themselves Sabians; and they demanded—and were promptly accorded—the toleration prescribed by the Qoran. Our Moslem authorities assure us that these were the first to bear the name "Sabian" in that neighbourhood. In the course of time many Harranians returned to their pagan faith, and those who had accepted Islam remained crypto-"Sabians".⁵⁴

This account may be open to question in some details, but its principal authority lived close to these events and the general outline may be accepted. Whether the Harranian pagans were justified in calling themselves "Sabian" has been the subject of much argument⁵⁵; this is not, however, relevant to the present discussion.

Arab sources on the Harranian "Sabians" are agreed on the fundamental principles of their religion. They were worshippers of the sun

⁵¹ Gen. 11 : 31 f.; 12 : 4 f.; 27 : 43; 28 : 10 ff.

⁵² Letter of Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Hilāl, secretary of the Caliph Al-Ṭā'ī; Catalogue of Arabic MSS. at Leyden, I.

⁵³ Qoran 2 : 59; 5 : 73; 22 : 17.

⁵⁴ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, IX, I (ed. Flügel, I, 320 f.), on the authority of the Christian Abū Yūsuf Isha' (?) al-Qaṭī'i, who flourished in the latter half of the 9th century (Chwolson, op. cit., II, p. vii).

⁵⁵ Moslem theologians and historians distinguished two groups of "Sabians" in the empire, those of the marshy country near Wasīṭ and those of Harran. Chwolson and most European scholars after him identify the former as the "pseudo-Christian" Mandaean or a related sect and as the Sabians of the Qoran; while the latter they regard as pagans who assumed the name "Sabian" for their own purposes.

(Helios), the moon (Sîn), and the other five planets, Saturn (Qronos), Jupiter (Bel), Mars (Ares), Venus (Baltî) and Mercury (Nabûq). Over these was a supreme deity. He remained, we are told, aloof from the government of the world and exercised his sway through the inferior order of gods and goddesses who inhabited, or indeed were, the planets. Each day of the week was devoted to one of the seven planets. There was a complex system of fasts and holidays, of sacrificial regulations, of mysteries and rites of initiation. There was a sacred book, apparently entitled the Book of the *Ḥanphē*.⁵⁶ The "Sabian" times of prayer were governed by the sun—they were offered at sunrise, after noon and at sunset. The direction of prayer was the North⁵⁷—appropriately enough among an ancient people whose religion was associated with the movements of the planets.⁵⁸

VII. THE RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF THE SUMATAR MONUMENTS

Sumatar is likely to have been, like Osrhoene in general, the scene of planet-worship in the 2nd century A.D. In the first place, we have the inscription to Sin, the Moon-deity. The characters of this undated record place it in the same period as the near-by inscription dated Adar 476, which corresponds to spring 165. Two compound names in the inscriptions seem also to refer to planet-deities. BLBN', which occurs twice, is to be rendered "Bel (that is, Jupiter) hath built"⁵⁹; while 'BSMY' may well mean "servant of Samyā", the blind one, an epithet of Mars. But further evidence may be adduced from the ruins themselves.

Mas'ūdi (d. 958), one of our best authorities on the "Sabians" of Harran, visited that city in the middle of the 10th century. He tells us that they had temples to each of the seven planets; each temple had a distinctive shape.⁶⁰ Mas'ūdi's account is generally corroborated by Dimašqi over three centuries later. The latter, it is true, gives no sources and does not write from direct observation. Nevertheless, he cannot be disregarded, for discrepancies in points of detail may well show that his narrative is drawn from an independent authority.

At Sumatar we have observed the remains of seven buildings standing in an arc on hillocks to the north and west of a central mount; each is

⁵⁶ De Goeje, op. cit., 295 f., correcting Ibn al-Nadīm quoted by Chwolson, op. cit., II, 21, who gives the name of this book as *Kitāb al-hātfi*. This word, however, is undoubtedly Syriac; it should probably be *hanphē* (pl.), rather than *hanaḥfi* or *ḥunafā*, as de Goeje.

⁵⁷ Ibn al-Nadīm, ib. (Flügel, op. cit., 318). Al-Bīrūnī (Sachau, op. cit., 329; cf. 188) states that the Harranians turned in prayer towards the South Pole, but the "Sabians"—he probably means the Mandaecans—towards the North Pole; cf. Chwolson, op. cit., II, 59 ff.

⁵⁸ For the religion of the "Sabians" see Chwolson, op. cit., I, ch. II.

⁵⁹ Above, p. 102; cf. Labūbnā, Labū (for Nabū) hath built, Phillips, *Doctrine of Addai*, 18.

⁶⁰ Mas'ūdi, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, ch. 67 (ed. Barbier de Meynard, IV, 62). The "Sabians" also had, according to Mas'ūdi (loc. cit.) and others, temples to certain abstract principles, the Prime Cause, Authority, Reason, Necessity, the Soul. But this may have been the product of a later age; according to Mas'ūdi, all these were round. They are not mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm or in the anonymous treatise edited by Dozy-de Goeje.

orientated towards this central mount. At first sight they appear to be the familiar tomb-structures, frequently with arcosolia, that are common throughout this area and were termed in Syriac *naphšāthā*.⁶¹ But at Sumatar there is a peculiar circumstance. The four buildings that have survived in comparatively good condition have each a distinctive form ; none resembles the other in shape. One is cylindrical. Another is square. The third is cylindrical imposed upon a quadrilateral base. The fourth was rectangular. All are constructed with skill and care. It is true that isolated examples of *naphšāthā* of these shapes are found elsewhere in Syria.⁶² But such a phenomenon—buildings each of a different shape in so confined a compass—appears to be without parallel. At Sumatar, moreover, they are all directed towards a focal point, the sacred mount on which, according to the inscription, there stood an altar and the symbols of the cult.

It is possible, then, that these buildings, each with the stereotyped or conventionalized form of a *naphšā*, were intended as miniature “ temples ” to the planets. For if we assume that the practice at Sumatar was the same as that attested for Harran some seven or eight centuries later, we may even venture—in so far as the literary evidence on the latter and my provisional observations on the former permit—to identify the deity to which each “ temple ” at Sumatar was dedicated.

Name of temple.	Shape of temple at Harran.		Suggested shape at Sumatar.	No. of ruin on Fig. 1.
	(a) Mas'udi.	(b) Dimašqi. ⁶³		
1. Saturn	. <i>musaddas</i>	<i>musaddas</i>	round	I
2. Jupiter	. <i>muthallath</i>	<i>muthallath</i>	round outline ?	III ?
3. Mars	. <i>mustatīl</i>	<i>murabba'</i>	rectangular	VIII
4. Sun	. <i>murabba'</i>	<i>murabba'</i>	square	II
5. Venus	. <i>muthallath fī jawf murabba'</i>	<i>muthallath mustatīl</i>	round upon square base	V
6. Mercury	. <i>muthallath fī jawf murabba' mustatīl</i>	<i>musaddas fī jawf murabba'</i>	rectangular outline ?	VII ?
7. Moon	. <i>muthamman</i>	<i>muḥammas</i>	round outline ?	IV ?

It should be remarked that No. 1 at Sumatar, which is round, has been identified here as the “ temple ” of Saturn. Our Arab writers, however, describe the Harranian temple of Saturn as *musaddas*. It is suggested, then, that this term is to be interpreted not as having six sides (as was held by Chwolson),⁶⁴ but as having some feature which was a multiple of, or based upon, six. This feature has perished in the ruin. Such may have been the case with the circular part of the “ temple of Venus ” which still stands,

⁶¹ See, for example, Wood and Dawkins, *Ruins of Palmyra*, 49–50, and Plates LIII–LVII, and Ahmed Djemal, *Alte Denkmäler aus Syrien*, 67–8 ; Pognon, op. cit., Plates I–II ; Cumont, *Etudes syriennes*, ch. VI ; Brunnnow and Domaszewski, *Provincia, Arabia*, III, 3 f. ; Butler, *Ancient Architecture in Syria*, A. 277 f., B. 91–3, 299 f. ; Butler, *Architecture and other Arts*, 112 f., 159 ff., 243 ff.

⁶² So, for example, a circular tower on a square foundation, Butler, *Ancient Architecture* . . . , A. 277 f. ; square buildings, Cumont, loc. cit. ; quadrilateral buildings, Pognon, loc. cit.

⁶³ *Nuḥbat al-Dahr fī 'Ajā'ib al-Barr wal-Baḥr*, I, 10 (Mehren, *Cosmographie*, 40 ff.).

⁶⁴ Op. cit., II, 367.

while Mas'ūdi's description of the other temples as *muthallath* or *muthamman* may also refer to circular buildings, to-day represented at Sumatar only by their outlines.

The location of the individual "temples" at Sumatar which this hypothesis postulates may be seen by reference to Fig. 1.

Clearly there was a reason for this arrangement of the "temples". We may remark, in the first place, that quadrilateral "temples" or "temples" with a quadrilateral element lie in closer proximity to the central mount than the purely cylindrical. That may, of course, be fortuitous. In the second place, the enumeration of the "Sabian" planet temples by Mas'ūdi and our other Arab informants, including the undoubtedly independent anonymous treatise edited by Dozy-de Goeje, follows the same order: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Mercury, Venus, the Moon. In the treatise of Dozy-de Goeje we read further: "And the first of these planets and the highest in position and the nearest to the signs of the zodiac is Saturn . . . (Jupiter) is below Saturn in rank and in height."⁶⁵ The cylindrical "temple" at Sumatar which has been associated with Saturn is also, it will be observed, situated of all the "temples" furthest south and west from the central mount. The ruin perhaps to be identified as the "temple" of Jupiter does not stand next to it, but it is the most westerly "temple" after that of Saturn.

Certain secondary features of the Sumatar monuments agree with our proposed identification of the ruins as "temples" of the planets. We have seen, for example, that they stand on hillocks, as we expect from the description of practices in Osrhoene by Jacob of Sarug. They stand, furthermore, in an arc to the west and the north. The great complex of ruins, including what we have provisionally termed the "Citadel", lies, however, due north of the sacred central mount. This may well be significant. Planet-worshippers made observations of the sky, and we know that the "Sabians" of Harran turned to the north—to make such observations they must have turned either to the north or the south—as the direction of prayer. At Sumatar, moreover, the central mount commands an uninterrupted view eastwards. This, too, may be of significance. The conclusion of the morning prayers of the Harranians coincided with the rising of the sun in the east. According to our proposed identifications the square "temple" due west of the central mount at Sumatar was dedicated to the Sun. If the devotees of Sumatar observed the same prayer regulations as the "Sabians" they would have recited the daily evening prayers on the central mount as the sun was sinking behind this "temple" in the west.

It will be remembered that there are two reliefs on the central mount at Sumatar: One, a bust, is dedicated to Sin in an undated inscription; the other, a full-length male figure, is dedicated to "the deity" and bears the date 13th Adar. The date may perhaps throw light on the identity of the "deity". At Harran sunset at the end of the 13th Adar opened the

⁶⁵ Op. cit., 303.

7th day of the great annual thirty days' fast in honour of the "Sabian" Moon-deity.⁶⁶ Both of the Sumatar reliefs may then have been consecrated to the Moon-deity Sin.

By the side of the bust a short text probably records a treasure. We are told that the "Sabians" of Harran had a public treasury for use whenever the security of the community was threatened. In the Moslem period this was accumulated, it appears, by means of a poll-tax of two dirhems levied three times a year, in Elul, in the former Kanun, and in Adar.⁶⁷ These, the 6th, 9th and 12th months, are also the months of the autumn equinox, the winter solstice and the spring equinox. The proximity of the treasure inscription to the bust of Sin may show that at Sumatar the treasure was in the care of that deity.

But the chief deity at Sumatar was Mārīlāhā, the "lord god". The New Moon of Šebaṭ, the day on which the temple of the central mount was dedicated, must have been his festal day. His cult emblem was a pillar, or *baetyl*, set upon a stool. This motif is not uncommon in this area. A horned or crescent pillar is a familiar lunar symbol; it is found, for example, on coins of Harran of the reign of Septimius Severus,⁶⁸ and we have seen it in Pognon's cave at Sumatar.⁶⁹ It is probable, however, that the sacred pillar of the central temple of Sumatar was not surmounted by a crescent. We have already suggested that "the king and his sons" mentioned in the dated temple inscription is the king of Edessa and can, in fact, be identified with Wā'el, son of Sahrū (p. 107). It is more than a coincidence that on two coins of the same Wā'el is depicted a "temple with pediment . . . two columns in front, and steps leading up to it; within, a cubic cult-object on a base supported by two curved legs".⁷⁰ The Syriac legend at the sides of this scene is in the script of the Sumatar inscriptions. It may be read MRY and 'LH; the former word is, however, doubtful, and the text may be 'LH 'LH.⁷¹ Another Edessan coin of the reign of the Emperor Elagabalus (218-222), about fifty years later, carries the same cult-emblem, a *baetyl* on a stool, in miniature.⁷² At that time native Syrian cults were receiving the approval and encouragement of the Emperor.

The religious bond between Sumatar and Edessa is confirmed by a tomb inscription at Urfa. It is undated, but again the writing resembles that of the dated Sumatar inscriptions. It reads:—

I, G'W (?), daughter of Bar Šūmā, have made for myself this tomb. I ask of him that cometh after (?) that shall enter here: Do not move my bones

⁶⁶ Ibn al-Nadīm, loc. cit. (Flügel, op. cit., 319, 324).

⁶⁷ Ibn al-Nadīm (Flügel, op. cit., 323, 324, 325); cf. Chwolson, op. cit., I, 513 f., II, 541.

⁶⁸ Hill, *Catalogue of Greek coins of Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persia*, 82, no. 4.

⁶⁹ Above, p. 103. It was, of course, well-known in antiquity; see, for example, Baur, *Excavations at Dura-Europos*, 1929-1930, 114 ff., Plates XVIII-XIX, and Seton Lloyd, "Seeking the Temple of Sin, Moon-god of Harran . . .," *Illustrated London News*, 21st February 1953, Fig. 13.

⁷⁰ Hill, op. cit., 91 f., nos. 2, 3.

⁷¹ Hill's reading, 'LH Elūl, is unlikely.

⁷² Hill, op. cit., 103, no. 79.

from my sarcophagus. And he who moves my bones—may he have no joy (?) and may he be cursed by Mārīlāhā.⁷³

We do not know the identity of the deity which carries the honorific title of Mārīlāhā. A list of the gods and goddesses of the pantheon of the "Sabians" of Harran is found in Ibn al-Nadīm and gives every sign of antiquity. It includes several planetary deities, including Mars, Bel (Jupiter) and probably Venus. But it is headed by the "chief of the gods", *rabbu 'lālihati*.⁷⁴ This is the literal rendering into Arabic of the Syriac Mārīlāhā. There may be grounds for holding that Mārīlāhā was the title of the supreme god which the "Sabians" believed to rule the universe through the agency of the planetary gods and goddesses.

VIII. OTHER PAGAN MONUMENTS.

Two hours' ride due north of Sumatar, at Sarimğara, also on the Tektek plateau, lie the curiously convulsed ruins of a large convent or palace.⁷⁵ There are also a number of caves which may have been underground chapels. Two brief Syriac inscriptions near by⁷⁶ and the motifs of the ornate friezes in the ruins leave little doubt that these buildings were inhabited by Christians. But there are signs of a previous pagan occupation. A levelled area on the summit of a mount behind the ruins may well have been the base of a temple edifice. Sockets show that it was orientated eastwards. A cave had been hollowed out below, perhaps to receive sacrificial blood; and an immense rough stone on the south edge of the mount may have been placed there to show the direction of the shrine of the supreme deity Mārīlāhā at Sumatar.

Other pagan memorials are found in the vicinity of Urfa itself. An undated Syriac inscription on a hill known locally as Jebel Ahdar, about thirty minutes' walk south of the city, has already been recorded by Sachau and Pognon.⁷⁷ They did not, however, observe the small niches (similar niches are found at Sarimğara) and erased reliefs in a near-by cave which are likely to be pagan. In the ruined monastery of Deir Ya'qūb, not far away, is a *naphšā* or tomb with an early Syriac inscription to Amašmeš, whose name must be connected with the worship of Šamaš, the Sun-deity. This was a well-known pagan site with an altar and probably many *naphšāthā*.⁷⁸ The Syriac inscription on the column of Urfa citadel has been discussed by several scholars; it is certainly pagan and belongs to the late 2nd or early 3rd century.⁷⁹ This is probably the case also with the poly-

⁷³ Sachau, "Edessenische Inschriften," *ZDMG.*, XXXVI (1882), 164; Pognon, op. cit., 80.

⁷⁴ Ibn al-Nadīm, loc. cit. (Flügel, op. cit., 325).

⁷⁵ This monument has not been recorded previously.

⁷⁶ They simply record the names: Isrīl Īshaq bar QWM, Isrīl Sergīs bar QWM.

⁷⁷ Sachau, op. cit., 160; Pognon, op. cit., 82, n. 3.

⁷⁸ Sachau, op. cit., 145; Pognon, op. cit., 105 f.; cf. Burkitt, *Euphemia and the Goth*, 39 f.

⁷⁹ Sachau, op. cit., 153; Chabot, *JA.*, 10th Series, VII, March 1906, 287; J. R. Harris, *Cult of the Heavenly Twins*, 106 ff.; Burkitt, "Throne of Nimrod," in

chromatic mosaic floor found at Urfa in 1901, showing six busts and accompanied by a short tomb inscription in Syriac.⁸⁰

I was fortunate enough to find at Urfa a more striking monument of this pagan period of Edessa. This is a mosaic of vivid colours and exceptional beauty which occupies most of the floor of an insignificant rock-cut chamber on the southern side of a wadi that skirts Urfa citadel (Plate XII, 1).⁸¹ It is more complete and more ornate than the mosaic previously found at Urfa. It measures 2.50 m. by 2.55 m. Within a fairly complex border of conventional design is a family group of seven full-length figures. The names are given, as in the other mosaic, in Syriac. The head of the family, Moqīmū, son of 'Abhedh Naḥai (?), has his portly figure well to the fore; his wife G'W is on his left, and on his right are his three sons, 'Z . . . ,⁸² 'bhedh Šmeš and Ma'nū and his daughter, Amath-Naḥai (?). In the background, between Moqīmū and G'W, is their granddaughter, Šalmath, daughter of Ma'nū. The figures are shown frontally. The variety and range of colours are superb. The men are dressed in the shirt and the wide "Parthian" trousers that are familiar from the monuments of Palmyra and Dura.⁸³ Over this they appear to wear a narrow-sleeved qaftan-like coat, not unlike the dress of the stone statue at Sumatar; this may well be the *qaba'*, which is said to have been worn by the pagans of Harran at their encounter with Ma'mūn in 830.⁸⁴ The sons apparently wear an overgarment with elbow-length sleeves. All the men have shoulder badges. On his head Moqīmū has a turban, and the son on his right a Phrygian cap; the other sons have their elegantly curled hair uncovered. Moqīmū's wife and daughter are dressed in conventional female attire. Their headdress, however, is unusual—a high bonnet of four tiers of alternate colours and wreathed in a veil, somewhat reminiscent of the headdress of women in medieval Europe. The granddaughter wears a simple robe with a wide

Proceedings of the Society for Biblical Archaeology, 1906, 149; Pognon, op. cit., 204; cf. also Duval, "Histoire d'Edesse," *JA.*, 8th Series, XVIII (1891), 98, about the site of the citadel.

⁸⁰ G. Mendel, *Catalogue des sculptures grecques . . .* Constantinople, 1914, III, 515; Chabot, *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, Comptes rendus*, 1906, 122; Burkitt, op. cit.; Moritz, op. cit., 171 ff. The reading Ba(r)tilāhā is preferable to Amathilāhā as Chabot, loc. cit.

⁸¹ See Seton Lloyd, op. cit., Fig. 2 and Supplement, IV.

⁸² Only the initial ' is certain; the next letter may be z and the last letter y. The name is probably too long to be Izāni, the name of a Bishop of Edessa in about 179.

⁸³ On Palmyra, Seyrig, "Armes et Costumes Iraniens de Palmyre," *Syria*, XVIII (1937), 4 ff.; on Dura, Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and its Art*, Fig. 10, and Plates XVIII.I and XXIII. For Parthian influence in Edessa, see Cureton, *Ancient Syr. Doc.*, 41, 97, 106.

⁸⁴ Ibn al-Nadīm, loc. cit. (Flügel, op. cit., 321), who tells us also that this was the dress of the "companions of the rulers" (*aṣḥābu 'lsultāni*; this may also be rendered "those in charge of the administration"), and that for this reason the Harranians who returned to their "Sabian" religion after the death of Ma'mūn did not resume this costume. The *qaba'* is described by Lane (*Lexicon*, Supplement, s.v. *qbw*) as "a kind of tunic, resembling the *qaftān*, generally reaching to the middle of the shank, dividing down the front and made to overlap over the chest". See further Dozy, *Dictionnaire des noms des vêtements chez les Arabes*, s.v.; on this costume in Egypt at a later period, see L. A. Mayer, *Mamluk Costume*, 1952, 21 ff. Abhgar of Edessa appears in dress similar to that of Moqīmū on coins of the reign of Gordianus III; Hill, op. cit., 113 f.

girdle. Her hair is arranged in the form of three curved combs or three curved combs of the colour of her hair are inserted, one on top and one on each side. G'W wears golden bracelets, while Moqīmū carries what appears to be two green leaves in his right hand.

It is clear from the names of members of this family—in particular 'bhedh Šmeš and Amath-Naḥai (?)⁸⁵—and from the absence of Christian formulae that they were pagans. The wife of Moqīmū has the same name as that G'W who in the tomb inscription at Edessa calls on Mārīlāhā to protect her remains ; they need not, of course, be identical. But it is extremely likely that the son of Moqīmū called Ma'nū is that Ma'nū, son of Moqīmū, who dedicates a relief in Pogon's cave at Sumatar in honour of Abhgar ruler of 'Arab. In that case it is probable that he was a planet-worshipper. We may, however, identify this family more exactly. For the family for whom such an elaborate mosaic was executed must have been wealthy and prominent. It was near the spot where the mosaic was found that the noble families of Edessa built their palaces, when King Abgar erected his winter palace after 201 on the site of the citadel.⁸⁶ There is little doubt that Ma'nū is Ma'nū the vizier whose name is recorded on the column in Urfa citadel, and that his daughter Šalmath, who is shown in the background in the mosaic, is none other than the Queen Šalmath of the column. She may well have been the wife of King Abhgar of Edessa, known to history as Abhgar the Great, who ruled from 179 to 212 or 213.⁸⁷ It was Abhgar the Great who adopted Christianity as the religion of the ruling house of Edessa in about 204. The mosaic floor, with its tokens of paganism, was probably made before, or, at any rate not long after, this date. Abhgar may then have borne the title of ruler of 'Arab before he ascended the throne ; the Ma'nū who dedicated the Sumatar relief may subsequently have become his vizier, and Abhgar—like many another Oriental potentate—married his vizier's daughter. We may note that Abhgar Ukāmā who, according to the popular but apocryphal tradition, corresponded with Jesus and accepted Christianity in the 1st century, was married to a Šalmath daughter of Meherdates.⁸⁸ There may well be confusion here between the names of the two consorts, the wife of the Abhgar who introduced Christianity as the official religion of Edessa in the legend and the wife of the Abhgar who introduced it in historical fact.

We have observed the high degree of architectural ability displayed in the Sumatar monuments—the two round towers of the same circumference, the “ temple ” building that is an exact square, the round building that is aligned with perfect precision with the outside of a square base ; we

⁸⁵ Names formed with Bar and Bath compounded with the title of a divinity seem to have survived into the Christian era (so, for example, Bar Samyā, Barbašmīn), but few, if any, names formed with 'bhedh and Amath.

⁸⁶ Duval, *op. cit.*

⁸⁷ The title *maliktha* of the column inscription denotes queen, wife of a king, not princess, daughter of a king ; for in the latter event her father Ma'nū would have been given the title king.

⁸⁸ Phillips, *op. cit.*, 9.

have noted the ornateness of the reliefs and the expert, almost classical, forms of the Syriac lettering in most of the inscriptions. This period, and in particular the reign of Abhgar the Great, was a time of exceptional vitality in Syriac culture at Edessa. Literature and philosophy flourished. The liberal arts were cultivated at the royal court ; the great Bardaisan was the friend of the king. This newly discovered mosaic shows the excellence of the Edessans in other walks of life—their wealth, the distinction of their costume, their taste for bright and varied colours. We see the fidelity of the artist—two members of the family group, for instance, have light eyes, the rest have brown eyes—and the care and subtlety of the portraiture. It may well be that the portrait was commissioned in order to show the high degree of Queen Šalmath's family ; she is the only grandchild shown, there are no daughters-in-law or son-in-law, and she appears between the head of the family and his wife. In their sophisticated and comfortable mien Moqīmū and his family remind us forcibly of the portraits of successful merchants many centuries later, when Europe was at the height of its prosperity and culture. In the 2nd–3rd century A.D. the people of Edessa, the great majority of them pagans, had attained the zenith of their glory.

My sincere thanks are due to the Turkish Department of Antiquities for their courteous permission to visit the remote region of the Tektek mountains ; to Bay Nuri Gökce, Director of the Hittite Museum, Ankara, and co-Director of the excavations at Sultantepe, for his cordial assistance ; to the Governing Body of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, for generously according me facilities to visit Turkey ; to Mrs. Seton Lloyd for the beautiful colour transcription of the Urfa mosaic ; to Dr. D. S. Rice for valuable criticism and for the use of photographs ; to Mr. J. Beckwith, of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, for helpful information on the costume of the mosaic (the conclusions reached in the present article are, however, my responsibility). But I am especially grateful to Mr. Seton Lloyd, Director of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara ; he drew my attention to the monuments at Sumatar (which he had visited the previous year), and afforded me every assistance and encouragement in the course of my work.

ADDENDA

Note 36 (p. 108). The eagle is also the symbol of the Sun ; see Seyrig, *Syria*, X, 1929, 336. On *nsr* as the name of an Arab divinity, see A. Caquot, *Syria*, XXIX, 1952, 91.

Note 61 (p. 113). See further P. Perdrizet, *Syria*, XIX, 1938, 47 ff. ; E. Will, *Syria*, XXVI, 1949, 258 ff.